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Gilmour, Gregory S.

Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

|   |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
|---|-------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---------|
| 1a Report Security Classification: Unclassified   |       |                                     | 1b Restrictive Markings  |                            |         |
| 2a Security Classification Authority  |       |                                     | 3 Distribution/Availability of Report  |                            |         |
| 4b Declassification/Downgrading Schedule  |       |                                     | Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.                          |                            |         |
| 5 Performing Organization Report Number(s)  |       |                                     | 5 Monitoring Organization Report Number(s)                                       |                            |         |
| 6a Name of Performing Organization<br>Naval Postgraduate School   |       | 6b Office Symbol<br>38              | 7a Name of Monitoring Organization<br>Naval Postgraduate School                  |                            |         |
| 8c Address<br>Monterey CA 93943-5000  |       |                                     | 7b Address (city, state, and ZIP code)<br>Monterey CA 93943-5000                 |                            |         |
| 9a Name of Funding/Sponsoring Organization  |       | 6b Office Symbol<br>(if applicable) | 9 Procurement Instrument Identification Number                                   |                            |         |
| 10 Address (city, state, and ZIP code)  |       |                                     | 10 Source of Funding Numbers   |                            |         |
|   |       |                                     | Program Element No   | Project No                 | Task No |
|   |       |                                     | Work Unit Accession No   |                            |         |
| 11 Title FROM SAC TO STRATCOM: The Origins of Unified Command Over Nuclear Forces   |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| 12 Personal Author Gregory S. Gilmour   |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| 13a Type of Report<br>Master's Thesis   |       | 13b Time Covered<br>From To         | 14 Date of Report (year, month, day)<br>93/06/17                                 | 15 Page Count 84           |         |
| 16 Supplementary Notation The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.  |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| 17 Cosati Codes   |       |                                     | 18 Subject Terms   |                            |         |
| Field   | Group | Subgroup                            | Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force, Navy, Service Rivalries, Strategic Air Command |                            |         |
|   |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| 19 Abstract (continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)   |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| <p>This thesis examines the creation of United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). This assessment reviews the past and recent attempts to create a unified command over strategic nuclear forces. Interviews conducted by the author with the major individuals involved in the current creation of STRATCOM, along with a historical review of past attempts to consolidate nuclear forces provide the basis for this thesis. In examining why STRATCOM was created, two competing arguments were used to answer the question presented. The main argument for the creation of STRATCOM was the fact that there was no need to keep strategic nuclear forces in separate commands at the end of the Cold War. The counter argument is that the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 alone forced the creation of STRATCOM. The results from this research show that there is now a trend among the military leaders to cooperate among themselves. The author uses the reasons for the creation of STRATCOM as a possible blueprint for how the Services will react to possible Unified Command Plan changes in the future.</p> |       |                                     |  |                            |         |
| 20 Distribution/Availability of Abstract<br>X_ unclassified/unlimited    _ same as report    _ DTIC users   |       |                                     | 21 Abstract Security Classification<br>Unclassified                              |                            |         |
| 22a Name of Responsible Individual<br>R. Mitchell Brown III   |       |                                     | 22b Telephone (include Area Code)<br>408 656-2286                                | 22c Office Symbol<br>NS/Br |         |

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FROM SAC TO STRATCOM:  
The Origins of Unified Command  
Over Nuclear Forces

by

Gregory S. Gilmour  
Lieutenant, United States Navy  
B.A., The Citadel, 1986

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 1993

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the creation of the United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). This assessment reviews the past and recent attempts to create a unified strategic command over nuclear forces. Interviews conducted by the author with the major individuals involved in the current creation of STRATCOM, along with a historical review of past attempts to consolidate nuclear forces provide the basis for this thesis. In examining why STRATCOM was created, two competing arguments were used to answer the question presented. The main argument for the creation of STRATCOM was the fact that there was no need to keep strategic nuclear forces in separate commands at the end of the Cold War. The counter argument is that the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 alone forced the creation of STRATCOM. The results from this research show that there is now a trend among the military leaders to cooperate among themselves. The author uses the reasons for the creation of STRATCOM as a possible blueprint for how the Services will react to possible Unified Command Plan changes in the future.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis examines the creation of the newest unified command: United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). The thesis delves into two periods in history. The first period begins with the implementation of the 1948 Key West Agreement to 1960. The second period begins with the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and concludes with the formal establishment of USSTRATCOM on 1 June 1992.

The first period is examined with regard to the historical significance of the unified strategic command issue. This period is used to explain the origins of the Air Force and Navy rivalry. While there was certainly another rivalry between the Army and Navy, this portion of the thesis focuses on the issues that put the Navy and the newly created Air Force at odds. The Bomber vs. Carrier debate and the Air Force's first attempts to consolidate all strategic nuclear forces under one unified command are examined to put the establishment of STRATCOM in historical perspective.

The second period begins following passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. This period is used to examine the reasons why a unified strategic command was created after thirty years of continual fighting between the Air Force and the Navy. Two main arguments are examined to determine why USSTRATCOM was created. The first argument is that the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 alone forced the creation of the new command. The second competing argument is

that the end of the Cold War alone forced the creation of USSTRATCOM.

There are two basic methodologies used in the course of this research. The first is a content analysis of Congressional documents, public speeches by military leaders and members of Congress, and writings by individuals who were involved in the unified strategic command idea from the 1950's to the establishment of USSTRATCOM on 1 June 1992. Interviews are the second methodology used. These interviews are important because they put into perspective the debate over the strategic command and what a monumental achievement it has been to create USSTRATCOM today. The following individuals were interviewed between November 1992 and March 1993:

- Gen. George L. Butler, USAF, Commander-in-Chief, United States Strategic Command;

- VADM. Michael C. Colley, USN, Deputy Commander-in-Chief, United States Strategic Command;

- Capt. Paul Brown, USN, Organizational Policy Branch (J-5), Joint Staff;

- CDR. C.J. Pickart, USN, aide to VADM Colley;

- MAJ. Paula Thornhill, USAF, CINCSTRAT staff Group/J004;

- Dr. Robert Parks, SAC/USSTRATCOM Historian.

This thesis concludes that neither the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 nor the end of the Cold War were the sole reasons for the creation of USSTRATCOM. The chronology of actions



taken by the JCS after the passage of Goldwater-Nichols proves that this piece of legislation alone did not force the creation of USSTRATCOM. The timing of the staffing process of the strategic command proposal reveals that neither the fall of the Berlin Wall nor the collapse of the Soviet Union provided sufficient impetus needed to force acceptance of the strategic command concept. At best, GNA provided an "enabling function" through its cumulative effect on Service mindsets, or culture. The thesis concludes that the primary reason that USSTRATCOM was created was due to a combination of timing and trust established between the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs. These men were willing to put Service rivalries aside to create a command "whose time had come."

Finally, this thesis maintains that this new Service cooperation will continue if the leaders of the military can put aside their old Service rivalries. Only through cooperation can the Services hope to successfully downsize and still leave a strong force in place.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the origins of USSTRATCOM. This thesis will investigate the question: Why was USSTRATCOM created? This question is quite relevant because the Air Force and the Navy have for over thirty years fought over the idea of one unified command over strategic nuclear weapons. Since this is an historical question, past attempts at consolidation of nuclear forces will be reviewed to link the past with the present.

Two competing arguments for the establishment of USSTRATCOM will be examined. The first argument is that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the main reason for the establishment of USSTRATCOM. The competing argument is that the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was the significant factor in the consolidation of all U.S. nuclear forces. Which event was the major driver in the creation of USSTRATCOM? The answer to the question of why USSTRATCOM was created could possibly foretell the U.S. defense agenda for future consolidations. By describing past arguments about the consolidation issue, the reader will be able link the past problems of consolidation to the present problems to see which of the competing arguments was the clear reason for consolidation. An examination of the views of the Air Force

and the Navy is central to understanding the problems of this consolidation.

The thesis also includes a content analysis of Congressional and other documents and speeches that deal directly with the creation of USSTRATCOM. Briefings on the creation of USSTRATCOM also were reviewed. These briefings were given primarily to the Service Chiefs and the Unified Commanders-in-Chief. This methodology will elucidate the reason for the consolidation of all U.S. nuclear forces.

There are several primary sources that form the data base for this thesis. First are interviews arranged by the author. These interviews were primarily conducted in March 1993 while on trips made to Washington D.C. and Offutt AFB, NE. Persons interviewed for this thesis included the major players in the development of USSTRATCOM: General George L. Butler, USAF, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Strategic Command, Vice Admiral Michael C. Colley, USN, Deputy Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Strategic Command, and Captain Paul Brown, USN, JCS, J-5. The second primary source for data comes from Congressional testimony which spans the time covering 1958 to 1992. Briefings that were given to the Service Chiefs and the Unified Commanders-in-chief are another primary source. Review of various histories that were written about Strategic Air Command and other attempts to create a strategic command comprises the final primary source material.

There are two major limitations regarding the data for this thesis. The first limitation stems from the fact that USSTRATCOM is new. There has been little time for the Services to react to the new command. The second limitation results from the speed with which USSTRATCOM was established, e.g., there was little time and hence, scant opportunity for criticism of the new command before it became established.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The second chapter describes the Cold War structure under which the U.S. nuclear forces were commanded. In this chapter, the old Strategic Air Command is examined with regard to its role in the U.S. nuclear equation. Targeting issues, particularly the mechanism to develop the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP), are reviewed. Past military nuclear doctrine is briefly examined with regard to its role in nuclear targeting. Finally, the employment of nuclear forces and the alert status of these forces is recounted.

Chapter III describes past attempts to consolidate strategic nuclear forces. The Air Force's attempt in 1958-1960 to create a strategic command is examined and the problems of consolidation are described.

Chapters IV and V are the heart of the thesis. These chapters deal with the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and the collapse of the Soviet Union respectively. These two chapters attempt to discover the real reasons for the creation of USSTRATCOM.



In the conclusion, the question that was presented in the beginning of the thesis is evaluated. This evaluation postulates the real reason why USSTRATCOM was created, especially in light of thirty years of inter-service rivalry.

## II. STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

### A. BACKGROUND OF STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

On 21 March 1946, Strategic Air Command was established at Andrews AFB, Washington, D.C. This command was a part of the redesignation of the Continental Air Forces. The Continental Air Forces were divided into three separate commands. They were the Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, and Air Defense Command. The head of the new Strategic Air Command (SAC) was General George C. Kenney.<sup>1</sup> General Carl Spaatz, then Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, stated the mission of the Strategic Air Command:

The Strategic Air Command will be prepared to conduct long-range offensive operations in any part of the world either independently or in cooperation with land and Naval forces; to conduct maximum range reconnaissance over land and sea either independently or in cooperation with land and Naval forces; to provide combat units capable of intense and sustained combat operations employing the latest and most advanced weapons; to train units and personnel for the maintenance of the Strategic Forces in all parts of the world; to perform such special missions as the Commanding General, Army Air Force may direct.

This mission statement shows that SAC was going to be the holder of strategic forces.

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy Laur, eds., Strategic Air Command, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 7.

The mention of "latest and most advanced weapons..." indicates that SAC would control not only present strategic weapon systems but those systems that have not yet been developed.

The man who was to propel the Strategic Air Command (SAC) to prominence was General Curtis E. LeMay. General LeMay was the second commander of SAC. He relieved General Kenney on 19 October 1948.<sup>2</sup> One of the first actions that General LeMay took was to move SAC from Andrews AFB in Washington D.C. to Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska. General LeMay stated that he had to: "... build the whole thing [SAC] up to make it effective and ready to go."<sup>3</sup> He also maintained that the decision to move SAC to Offutt was made before he took command.<sup>4</sup>

General LeMay was the driving force behind the development of SAC. It was during his tenure, 19 October 1948-30 June 1957, that SAC became the vanguard of the U.S. nuclear defense force. By the time General LeMay left SAC in 1957, he had brought the B-52, U-2, and the early missile programs on line in SAC.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>3</sup> General Curtis E. LeMay and MacKinlay, Mission with LeMay, (New York: DoubleDay & Company, INC., 1965), 429.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy M. Laur, ed., Strategic Air Command, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 48.

The reason that LeMay was able to achieve such success was largely due to his leadership style. From the very beginning he was concerned with every aspect of his command. His concerns ranged from training his troops to how they lived. A good example of how he took care of his people was the building of "SAC-Type" barracks. These barracks made living conditions more homelike rather than cold barracks living.<sup>6</sup> The other end of the spectrum was the operational side of SAC. General LeMay instituted the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI). This was a type of inspection to see if the alert forces could execute their portion of the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP) within the prescribed time limit. In his book, General LeMay describes an ORI:

Our big effort is in what we call the ORI, the Operational Readiness Inspection or test. In this, the inspector arrives on the scene, utterly surprising everyone. He says "Execute your war plan," and you either do it or you don't. He's not one bit interested in whether you are short ten blankets or not. What he wants to know is, "Can you fight? and with what? and how will you fight, and how soon?"<sup>7</sup>

This type of inspection was infamous throughout the Air Force and was well known in the other Services. The ORI was used to keep SAC alert forces, both bomber forces and missile forces, on top of their profession. The thought was that if they failed the inspection they would lose a nuclear war.

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<sup>6</sup> General Curtis E. LeMay and MacKinlay Kantor, Mission With LeMay, (New York: DoubleDay & Company, INC., 1965), 467.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 446.



By the time that General LeMay left SAC, the vanguard for the U.S. strategic nuclear forces were on line and maintaining a watch for any possible Soviet nuclear attack. One of the two legacies that General LeMay left SAC was the "Spot Promotion" for combat crews that were the top of their field.<sup>8</sup> This spot promotion system was associated with combat crew duty. Officers and enlisted alike were eligible for the promotions. General LeMay believed that this was an incentive to keep up the morale of the SAC alert crews and keep them proficient. By 28 December 1965, General McConnell, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, terminated the spot promotion system that General LeMay had instituted.<sup>9</sup> The main reason for the termination was to bring SAC promotions in line with the rest of the Air Force.

The last legacy that General LeMay left SAC was the their emblem and the motto for SAC. For the next 45 years, the motto for SAC was "Peace IS Our Profession." The motto came about as a result of a combat crew competition held to come up with a motto for the command.<sup>10</sup>

On 30 June 1957, General LeMay was relieved as commander of SAC and reassigned as the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air

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<sup>8</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy M. Laur, Strategic Air Command, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 60.

Force. However, General LeMay kept on top of the functions of SAC. Between 11-13 November 1957, General LeMay was the pilot in command of a KC-135 when it broke the world speed record from Westover AFB, Massachusetts to Buenos Aires, Argentina. The second record that he broke was the return trip to Washington D.C.<sup>11</sup>

There were many other Commanders of SAC who left their marks on the command. However, it was General LeMay who built SAC and made it the vanguard of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces. The reputation of SAC was built by achieving records that had never been achieved in aerial flight. Most of these records were broken trying to prove that SAC was willing to go to great lengths to protect the country and establish its reputation as the world's finest fighting force.

The mission of SAC was to preserve the peace during the Cold War by deterring the Soviet Union from launching an attack against the United States or its allies, but SAC also participated in the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. The use of SAC in these wars showed that it was still a major conventional strategic asset.

The creation of SAC under General LeMay was a monumental feat. In a short time, General LeMay was able to make SAC the guardian of the United States' nuclear arsenal. General LeMay is instrumental to this thesis because as General Butler

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 52.

points out, General LeMay was the father of the strategic command concept. The drive of General LeMay could be seen when he tried to dominate the nuclear target list of the nation. It was during his attempt to consolidate nuclear targeting under SAC that he came up with the idea of a unified strategic command. When General LeMay left SAC, he became the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In this powerful position, he was able to push his idea of a strategic command on General White the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In the end, the father of the strategic command concept was General LeMay.<sup>12</sup> He saw SAC as the eventual strategic command and he took steps to make sure it was ready to assume that role when the time came.

#### **B. JOINT STRATEGIC TARGET PLANNING STAFF (JSTPS)**

General LeMay has been credited with the formation of SAC. General Power, LeMay's successor, is credited with establishing JSTPS by direction of Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates. However, JSTPS was a compromise between the Air Force and Navy proposals on consolidation.<sup>13</sup>

In an attempt to consolidate nuclear operations, Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates offered a compromise that soothed both

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<sup>12</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>13</sup> Charles K. Hopkins, Unclassified History of The Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS), (Omaha: Staff Historian for the Commander of Strategic Air Command, 15 April 1989), 5.

the Air Force and Navy while consolidating strategic nuclear targeting. The compromise stemmed from an Air Force attempt to consolidate all nuclear forces under one unified command. Since the Navy and Air Force could not see eye-to-eye on the unified command, Secretary Gates came up with the idea of a unified targeting staff that would report directly to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>14</sup>

On 16 August 1960, Gates established the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff at Offutt AFB, Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>15</sup> The Commander of SAC was to be the director of the planning staff with a Navy Vice Admiral as his deputy. After 1963, representatives of the other nuclear CinCs were also included on the planning staff.<sup>16</sup>

Desmond Ball outlines the functions of the planning staff:

The JSTPS performs two primary functions: the first is to maintain the National Strategic Target List (NSTL), which contains data on all the targets that might be attacked in a nuclear strike; the second is to prepare the SIOP. The SIOP assigns targets to all strategic weapon systems, including "bombers, fighter bombers, intercontinental ballistic and air launched missiles... and missile submarines."<sup>17</sup>

This explanation shows that part of General LeMay's idea of a

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<sup>14</sup> Charles K. Hopkins, Unclassified History of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, (Omaha: Command Historian for CinCSAC, 15 March 1989), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Desmond Ball, "The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983," in Strategic Nuclear Targeting, ed. Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 59.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



unified strategic command was used. However, the Air Force did not get their full proposal which not only included running the nuclear planning but also owning all strategic nuclear forces.

In 1946, the JCS began developing war plans that used national policy objectives as their basis. By the end of the decade, these plans became the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). In later years, the JSCP became the guidance by which the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP) was developed.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that SAC was the author of the SIOP. Since SAC developed the SIOP, they had significant influence on the JCSP.

The National Strategic Target List (NSTL) and the SIOP are the link between the national policy objectives and the operational nuclear forces.<sup>19</sup> The Nuclear Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy (NSTAP) later called the Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy (NUWEP) was the guidance for the SIOP. Charles Hopkins stated:

Formulation of subsequent NSTAPs and guidance was an evolutionary process. At first the DOD and JCS developed general guidelines based on public statements by administration officials as well as more detailed internal directives. In this manner, they incorporated the "massive destruction" strategy of the Eisenhower-Dulles era and later the "assured destruction" strategy of the Kennedy-McNamara era. What is generally accepted as the

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<sup>18</sup> Charles K. Hopkins, Unclassified History of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff, (Omaha: Command Historian for CinCSAC, 15 March 1989), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3.

first policy statement on nuclear deterrence was spelled out by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles late in the Eisenhower administration and was called "massive retaliation."<sup>20</sup>

This statement shows that the development of nuclear war plans was just as much politics as it was a military issue. Since SAC was the country's premier nuclear war planner, they articulated their point of view through the JCS on what the national strategy should look like.

The function of the JSTPS is to form the overall nuclear plan for the U.S. strategic nuclear forces. The SIOP which is produced by the JSTPS is an ever-changing document.<sup>21</sup> Constant input is needed from the military and the National Command Authority (NCA) to make the plan work. Political and intelligence inputs are very important to the SIOP.

### **C. NUCLEAR FORCE POSTURE**

This section briefly examines the alert status of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces. The purpose here is not to outline the actual types of weapons that were at the disposal of the President, but to show the readiness posture from 1958 to 1991. The three areas that are reviewed are the bomber alerts, missile alerts and the airborne command post. Unclassified naval submarine alert rates are not available.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1.

During the early days of SAC, the goal was to have one-third of the bomber force on alert. By 1957, SAC had established a one-third ground alert for its bomber force. This meant that one-third of the bomber force was on a 15 minute alert.<sup>22</sup> By 1958, the Air Force reorganized to accommodate the one-third alert status. However, over time the percentages of aircraft on alert steadily increased. The Vietnam era saw the alert rate fall as low as 28%. This was mainly due to SAC conducting bombing missions over North Vietnam.<sup>23</sup> After the Vietnam war, the alert percentages rose dramatically to an average of about 97% of the one third required to be on alert.<sup>24</sup>

SAC also tested an airborne alert posture from 15 September 1958 through 15 December 1958. The nickname was **Headstart I**.<sup>25</sup> In 1959, General Power testified that SAC was maintaining an airborne alert fully loaded and ready to fly to targets in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> This alert status continued

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<sup>22</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy M. Laur, Strategic Air Command, 2nd ed., (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 49.

<sup>23</sup> Data provided by Dr. Parks, Historian for USSTRATCOM, from SAC archives. Dr. Parks provided the data during a telephone interview with the author on 1 December 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy M. Laur ed., Strategic Air Command, 2nd ed (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990), 57.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 63.

until the solid propellant ICBMs came into the arsenal. In 1965, during the high point of the airborne alert nicknamed **CHROME DOME**, SAC had as much as one full Wing airborne. By the time the airborne alert ended in 1967, SAC had as few as 4 B-52s airborne.<sup>27</sup>

The missile alert rates were somewhat better than the bomber rates. The initial goal was one-third, like the bombers.<sup>28</sup> By the time SAC was disestablished, almost 100% of the missiles available were on alert.<sup>29</sup> These alert rates show that SAC was willing to maintain a high state of readiness in case there was an unprovoked nuclear attack from the Soviet Union. SAC also could have been trying concurrently to prove that they were the command that should be commanding all strategic nuclear forces.

The airborne command post, better known as **LOOKING GLASS**, began permanent alerts on 3 February 1961.<sup>30</sup> **LOOKING GLASS** was a converted KC-135 tanker that was outfitted with advanced communication equipment. This alert center was in constant communication with SAC HQ, JCS, SAC bases, and airborne

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<sup>27</sup> Data provided by Dr. Parks during a telephone interview with the author on 1 December 1992.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Norman Polmar and Timothy M. Laur ed., Strategic Air Command, (Baltimore: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1990) ,75.

aircraft.<sup>31</sup> If there were a nuclear attack on SAC headquarters, the airborne command post could execute any launch order received from the National Command Authority.

This section showed how SAC was on a constant war time alert status. It seems that ever since the Air Force proposed the strategic command concept, they had tried to prove that they were the ones to carry the nuclear burden. They had developed a system that integrated every facet of nuclear war. The only weapon system that was not under SAC control was the ballistic submarine force. In the final analysis, when SAC was disestablished and STRATCOM established, in June 1992, none of the nuclear command structure that SAC used was dismantled. STRATCOM simply took over the nuclear command structure that once belonged to SAC. This would indicate that SAC was always ready to assume the STRATCOM role if they had ever gotten the chance.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



### **III. THE ORIGINS OF A STRATEGIC COMMAND**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The creation of Strategic Air Command was crucial to the birth of the Air Force. Men such as General Curtis LeMay pushed hard to see that SAC not only flourished but the Air Force did the same. This chapter examines early conflicts between the Air Force and the Navy with regard to the concept of a unified command for strategic nuclear forces.

The two areas that are examined center on the carrier versus the bomber issue. This first debate seemingly ended with the "Revolt of the Admirals." The second area to be reviewed is the first debate on a unified strategic command. This debate rekindled the fire that had developed between the Air Force and the Navy over the carrier-bomber debate.

#### **B. THE CARRIER VS. THE BOMBER DEBATE.**

The origins of the Air Force and Navy rivalry go back to the Key West agreement in 1948. Secretary of Defense Forrestal held a conference with his Service chiefs in Key West Florida from March 11 to the 14th. The purpose of this conference was to establish the roles and missions of the Services.

Ever since the National Security Act of 1947, the Services had argued about roles and missions. Secretary Forrestal

believed that it was time to flesh out the specific roles and missions of the Services. Forrestal stated that by sitting down with the chiefs, they could collectively come up with a roles and mission statement that everyone could live with at least for the near future.<sup>32</sup> Secretary Forrestal stated in his diaries the settlements of the disputes over roles and missions:

1. For planning purposes, Marine Corps to be limited with the inclusion of a sentence in the final document that the Marines are not to create another land army.
2. Air Force recognizes right of Navy to proceed with the development of weapons the Navy considers essential to its function but with proviso that the Navy will not develop a separate strategic air force, this function being reserved to the Air Force. However, the Navy in carrying out of its function is to have the right to attack inland targets for example, to reduce and neutralize airfields from which enemy aircraft may be sortying to attack the Fleet.
3. Air Force recognized the right and need for the Navy to participate in an all-out air campaign. And more specifically, the Navy was not to be denied use of the atomic bomb.<sup>33</sup>

These roles and missions state the Air Force had the responsibility of strategic bombing. However, the Navy had the right to do bombing while performing their mission. The only problem with these mission statements were that no line

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, "Super Carriers and B-36 Bombers: Appropriations, Strategy and Politics," from Harold Stein, ed., American Civil-Military Decisions, (Alabama: University Press, 1963), 474.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Millis (ed), The Forrestal Diaries (Viking, New York, 1951), 392. Quoted in Paul Y. Hammond, "Super Carrier and B-36 Bombers: appropriations, strategy and Politics, 474.

could be drawn between what was an Air Force bombing prerogative and what was the Navy's. This ambiguity would cause many problems that went on for decades.

While these were the basic roles and missions of the Services, the new aircraft carrier that the Navy wanted to build was not finalized as the Navy expected at the end of the conference.<sup>34</sup> The Air Force was upset about the carrier because they believed that it would infringe on the strategic bombing mission which was the Air Force's responsibility. Secretary Forrestal had stated earlier in the conference that the President had approved the construction of the new 80,000 ton carrier that the Navy wanted. The Chiefs said "that they would go along with it because it was the President's program."<sup>35</sup> The misunderstanding that came out of the Key West conference became an outright battle between the Air Force and the Navy over the fate of the carrier.

The misunderstanding began at a news conference. The Secretary of Defense boldly announced that the new carrier was going to be built for strategic air warfare. This infuriated the Air Force because strategic bombing was their purview.<sup>36</sup> Further statements that were made by Secretary Forrestal about

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<sup>34</sup> Hammond, 475.

<sup>35</sup> Denfeld testimony in Hearings on H.R. 6049, House Armed Services Committee, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 6860. Quoted in Hammond p 475.

<sup>36</sup> Hammond, 475.

the carrier maintained that the carrier would not be built strictly for a Navy role but also to contribute to the Air Force's mission.<sup>37</sup>

The vague statements made by Forrestal about the Navy's new carrier fueled the misunderstanding between the Service Chiefs and Forrestal as to what had really been agreed to at Key West.<sup>38</sup> The Air Force took exception with the new carrier. The Air Force saw the carrier as a strategic asset on which they should have a vote. The Navy maintained that the carrier was not a strategic asset, although the new carrier would launch aircraft that could drop nuclear weapons. The idea that the Navy could drop nuclear weapons seemed to encroach on the Air Force mission of strategic bombing.

The fight for the carrier continued throughout the summer of 1948. On 20 September 1948, Secretary of Defense Forrestal and the Service Chiefs met at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. The purpose of this meeting was to deal with the roles and missions issues they had discussed at Key West. This time however, more efforts were made to define the functions of the different weapons, in particular the airplane.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 487.

The airplane had several functions (e.g., bombing, transport and fighter). Therefore, specific missions for the airplane needed to be defined. The Navy had aircraft that could do the strategic bombing mission just as the Air Force. However, the Air Force was primarily responsible for strategic bombing according to the Key West Agreement. The problem, as the Air Force saw it, was that the Navy was getting a weapons system, the carrier, without any input from the Service that had primary responsibility for the carrier's strategic mission.<sup>40</sup> There was no real resolution of the airplane roles and missions issue to the satisfaction of either the Air Force or the Navy. In the end, Secretary of Defense Forrestal left office without resolving the carrier-bomber issue.

### C. THE ADMIRALS REVOLT

The revolt of the admirals was a direct result of interservice rivalry over the cancellation of the carrier United States. After the 1948 election, President Truman decided to replace Secretary Forrestal with a man who was more forceful and willing to knock a few heads.<sup>41</sup> Louis Johnson was the man that Truman selected to reign in the Services.

The Navy was confident that the new carrier was safe after the Newport conference. The Air Force had failed for the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Keith D. McFarland, "The 1949 Revolt of The Admirals," Parameters 11 (Spring 1981): 55.



moment to get the carrier canceled. However, the new Secretary of Defense had another agenda and it did not include a new carrier for the Navy. In fact, when Secretary Johnson was sworn in as the new Secretary of Defense, he had publicly stated that he was going to bring real unification to the armed forces.<sup>42</sup>

The Navy had been most opposed to the unification of the Services. This unification brought the Services under the direct control of a Secretary of Defense. The consolidation of the Services under one secretary would centralize control of the Services. This meant that the Secretary of Defense was the main speaker for the military instead of the individual Services. This did not fit into the plans of the New Secretary of Defense. One of Secretary Johnson's first acts to drive home the point that the Services were going to unify was the cancellation of observances of the individual Service days (i.e., Army Day).<sup>43</sup>

Secretary Johnson met with the Service Chiefs to discuss their views on the continuation of the new Navy carrier. The Army Chief of Staff, General Omar Bradley, and Air Force Chief of Staff General Hoyt Vandenberg agreed with Johnson that the carrier should be canceled. Admiral Louis Denfeld, Chief of Naval Operations, on the other hand, disagreed

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

with the other Chiefs and believed that the carrier should be built.<sup>44</sup>

On 22 April 1949, Secretary Johnson had made up his mind to finally cancel the carrier. However, before he made the decision public, Johnson told the chairmen of both the House and Senate Armed Service Committee, Representative Carl Vinson and Senator Millard Tydings. The next day Johnson advised the President of his decision to cancel the carrier. Truman agreed with Johnson's decision. The next day Secretary Johnson told Secretary of the Navy Sullivan to cancel the carrier.<sup>45</sup>

This cancellation was what the Navy most feared when the issue of unification had come to a head. E.B. Potter in his biography of Admiral Burke stated the Navy's feelings on the cancellation:

Johnson's high-handed cancellation, without detailed study, without giving the navy a chance to present its case, without consulting or even notifying Secretary Sullivan, Admiral Denfeld, or interested congressional committees, infuriated naval leaders and aroused adverse reactions in Congress.<sup>46</sup>

The cancellation of the carrier and other decisions that a

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<sup>44</sup> United States Congress, House, Armed Services Committee, The National Defense Program-Unification and Strategy, Hearings, 81st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 619-20. Quoted by Keith McFarland in "The Revolt of The Admirals," Parameters 11 (Spring 1981): 56-57.

<sup>45</sup> McFarland., 57.

<sup>46</sup> E.B. Potter, Admiral Arleigh Burke (New York: Random House, 1990), 320.

powerful Secretary of Defense could make without consultation of the Services is what the Navy feared the most.

The Navy, in an attempt to preserve its institutional standing, made a public appeal to the Congress and the nation. Cedric R. Worth, a civilian assistant to the Under Secretary of the Navy, leaked evidence that there was corruption that involved the Secretary of Defense and Air Force Secretary Symington. Op-23, the office that worked on the unification issue and headed by Captain Arleigh Burke, helped to gather information for the charges. However, the report was to remain confidential. Cedric Worth broke his promise of confidentiality and leaked the report.<sup>47</sup>

This leak set off a flurry of events that began with Congressional hearings. The Navy's top aviator, Admiral Arthur W. Radford, came to Washington from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet to head off the testimony in favor of the carrier.<sup>48</sup> The reason that the Navy took such a vocal stance against the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs was their stated belief that the Navy was being "systematically and intentionally destroyed."<sup>49</sup>

The Navy took the offensive and labelled the Air Force's

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>48</sup> McFarland, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 59.

B-36 as a "billion dollar blunder."<sup>50</sup> This led to Congressional testimony from the Navy, Air Force, General Bradley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary Johnson. By the end of the testimony, Cedric Worth had admitted the charges were fabricated and Admiral Denfeld backed his admirals to his own professional demise. Captain Burke was also on the hit list of then Navy Secretary Matthews because of his office's involvement in the allegations against the Secretary of Defense. His promotion to Flag rank was blocked by Secretary of the Navy Matthews.<sup>51</sup> In the end, Captain Burke was promoted to flag rank and eventually became the Chief of Naval Operations during the next attempt by the Air Force to consolidate nuclear forces under one unified commander.

#### **D. IMPLICATIONS OF THE CARRIER ISSUE**

The best way to analyze the behavior of the Navy and the Air Force in the previous two issues is to review the institutions that each Service represents. Carl Builder, in his book The Masks of War, does an excellent job of characterizing the separate Services.

Builder describes the Navy's character:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>51</sup> E.B. Potter., 328-30.

The Navy, more than any of the other services and over anything else, is an institution. That institution is marked by two strong senses of itself: its independence and stature.<sup>52</sup>

The Navy's stature as an independent institution is on a level with that of the U.S. government...

Who is the Navy? It is the supranational institution that has inherited the British Navy's throne to naval supremacy. What is it about? It is about preserving and wielding sea power as the most important and flexible kind of military power for America as a maritime nation. The means to those ends are the institution and its traditions, both of which provide for a permanence beyond the people who serve them.<sup>53</sup>

This kind of attitude is what the Navy lived up to for generations. This impression about the Navy and its institutional prominence over the other Services is what has caused many problems for the Navy throughout the last four-and-a-half decades.

The reason the Navy has resisted change is because its institutional independence is lessened each time there is a reorganization. The Navy lost its independence in the National Security Act of 1947. In this Act, the Navy fell from the prominence and independence of a cabinet position in the President's administration to a subcabinet level.

This meant that the Navy no longer had the power to go directly to the President if it wanted to. The centralized control of the military through the Secretary of Defense

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<sup>52</sup> Carl H. Builder, The Masks of War, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 31.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 32.



threatened the Navy. This threat was realized by Truman's Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson. When Johnson took the Air Force's side on the B-36 issue, this galvanized the Navy against any further attempts at centralization. This stonewalling of reform or reorganization has put the Navy in a bad light compared to the other Services. Builder shows how the Navy has been viewed by the Army and Air Force throughout the years:

So fierce had been the Navy's opposition to service unification, that even Truman was intrigued with one exasperated Army unification proposal which suggested that "the only way to overcome the Navy's resistance would be to do away with the War Department, transfer all of its elements to the Navy, and redesignate that organization as the Department of Defense."<sup>54</sup>

"The Department of the Navy," General David Jones volunteered, "is the most strategically independent of the services-it has its own army, navy and air force. It is least dependent on others. It would prefer to be given a mission, retain complete control over all assets, and be left alone."<sup>55</sup>

The statements above are accurate. The Navy is independent and it considers change to be an institutional threat. The centralization of the defense establishment caused the Navy to lose control over its direction and mission. This situation was exacerbated by the Air Force, the new kid on the block, which tried to control all aspects of strategic warfare. The

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<sup>54</sup> David C. Jones, "What's Wrong with Our Defense Establishment," New York Times Magazine, 7 November 1982, p.73; quoted by Lacy, Within Bounds, p.536; cited by Builder, The Masks of War, 32.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 31.

Air Force's desire to control strategic weapons ran head long into the Navy's future. This future was the aircraft carrier. The Air Force's attempt to kill the carrier due to its use as a strategic bomber platform was seen by the Navy as an attack on the Navy as an institution.

The revolt of the admirals was an excellent example of how the Navy as reacted to an encroachment on it turf. Despite the Korean War, scars of the "Admiral's Revolt" persisted long enough to be an issue when Admiral Burke became Chief of Naval Operations. Once he became the CNO, Admiral Burke stonewalled the Air Force's idea of unifying all strategic forces under one command headed by an Air Force officer.

The Air Force, on the other hand, is quite different from the Navy; according to Builder:

The Air Force, conceived by theorists of air power as an independent and decisive instrument of warfare, sees itself as the embodiment of an idea, a concept of warfare, a strategy made possible and sustained by modern technology. The bond is not an institution, but the love of flying machines and flight.<sup>56</sup>

The Navy had an established institutional prominence, the Air Force was too young to have the Navy's institutional prominence at the time of the bomber issue. The new status of the Air Force, defined by the National Security Act of 1947, and its role and mission, as defined by the Key West agreement, gave it the ammunition to go after the Navy. This Air Force and Navy rivalry that began in the 1940's lasted

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<sup>56</sup> Builder, .32.

until 1990, when it succumbed to a changing mindset in the military brought about by a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.

#### **E. THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO CONSOLIDATE STRATEGIC FORCES**

The end of the "Admirals Revolt" left the Air Force and the Navy in a serious rivalry. The Navy viewed the Air Force as a threat. The Air Force, as the new service, viewed itself as the only service needed to win the next war. The Air Force's attempt to establish itself as a stand-alone service ran head long into a naval institution that was not willing to give up sovereignty over either its ships or submarines.

By the mid-1950's, the issue of unification of the services was brought to the forefront of the military establishment. The Air Force once again was out in front of the push for service unification. General Nathan F. Twining, Air Force Chief of Staff, believed that the services were trying to attain "service self-sufficiency" during a time when tasks were not service-specific anymore.<sup>57</sup> General Twining was in favor of a single service but he knew that the other services, especially the Navy, were against the idea.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Robert Frank Futrell, Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force 1907-1960, Vol.1 (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1989), 575-76.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

The next best thing to service unification was the creation of the "Unified commands." General Twining thought that a unified command was a very good idea. Robert Futrell portrays General Twining and the Air Force's point of view on unified commands:

"From unified commands," he said, "we get requirements for forces and weapons needed for clearly defined tasks. In this respect, they differ from requirements that develop when you try to plan for meeting all kinds of war, in all areas, with all kinds of weapons." Twining favored the creation of additional unified commands: a joint Strategic Air Command, for example, should be established along the lines of the Continental Air Defense Command. In unified commands, men of all services could become identified as members of a common mission-men of an oriented force.<sup>59</sup>

General Twining's comments on the unified commands indicates that the Air Force was still wanting to push the unified strategic command idea. The best way for the Air Force to sell the strategic command idea was to adopt the unified command principle as a whole.

In the 1956-1957, Colonel Albert Sights, Jr. published an article entitled "Major Tasks and Reorganization." In his article Colonel Sights states:

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<sup>59</sup> Gen. Nathan F. Twining, chief of staff, U.S. Air Force, "Remarks before the National War College," 31 May 1956; Washington Daily News, 8 June 1956. Cited by Futrell, 575.

The primary objective of national defense is to counter the threat of nuclear war. Two basic military tasks are dictated by this requirement. First, we must maintain a long-range nuclear striking force capable of inflicting mortal damage upon any would-be aggressor; and second, we must present a defensive shield for the protection of our own sources of strength against an enemy attack.<sup>60</sup>

These major tasks call for unified commands that have "operational control" of commands that are dedicated to a specific task.<sup>61</sup> It just so happens that the Air Force was in control of those assets that were to defend the country in the way he portrayed. Sights stated that the number of combat commands would be reduced to five from the present seventeen commands.<sup>62</sup>

According to Sights, the first task for the nation's defense was to guard against nuclear war:

An organization designed to perform this task would constitute the principal deterrent against any attack in kind by a potential aggressor. It should incorporate those elements of all three services whose primary function is to strike decisive blows with the most effective weapons available against the sources of enemy strength in whatever part of the world they may be found. Weapons systems and techniques should be chosen to afford an optimum combination of great offensive power and low vulnerability to enemy counteraction. Whether they be airplanes or missiles and whether launched from land or sea, they should be evaluated and selected solely on the basis of the task to be done.

This task organization might appropriately be named the "Strategic Atomic Command." It should stand at all times

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<sup>60</sup> Col. Albert P. Sights, Jr., "Major Tasks and Reorganization," Air University Quarterly Review 9, no. 1 (Winter 1956-1957), 5.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 14.



ready for the instant commitment of every resource to its assigned task. It is the great deterrent to unrestricted nuclear war. Its deterrent power is the product of its readiness for action, its offensive potential, and its own invulnerability to destruction. The Strategic Atomic Command may be visualized as constituting the present day counter of Mahan's "position of menace." It must be maintained as a force-in-being and not diverted to other tasks in such a way as to compromise the deterrent effect of its menace.<sup>63</sup>

This description of a Strategic Atomic command looks very much like what General LeMay had in mind for the Strategic Air Command. It would seem by the remarks of General Twining and the article published by Colonel Sights that the Air Force was on the hunt to solidify their strategic bombing mission by creating a unified strategic command. This new command would unify all strategic nuclear force under a command that an Air Force general would head.

Ironically, Sights' force structure was similar to the task-oriented Unified command structure that was outlined in the Military Strategy of the United States published in 1992.<sup>64</sup> During the period of Sights' article, the Navy was trying to keep the idea of further unification at bay.

During the 1958 hearings on defense reorganization, Admiral Burke, Chief of Naval Operations, and Representative Richard B. Russell, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, discussed the idea of a unified strategic command:

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>64</sup> Military Strategy of the United States, Department of Defense, January 1992.

CHAIRMAN RUSSELL. At present time, I believe, in the Department of Defense we have nine unified commands that take their orders directly from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I suppose the outstanding one is the Strategic Air Command. In the other services we have strategic forces, we have carriers in the Navy, we have this new organization, the Army Strike Corps, I believe they call it, and in the Navy we soon hope to have functioning the Polaris.

Do you foresee that all of these strategic forces will be combined into a single unified command?

ADMIRAL BURKE. No, sir, because I do not think that we will have money enough ever in this country to provide forces solely for a single task and then other forces solely for another single task.<sup>65</sup>

Admiral Burke's answer to Chairman Russell was typical of the Navy's view of consolidation. The unified commanders would request forces and the services would just furnish the CinCs with what they wanted, regardless of what the services' requirements for those particular forces were at the time.

In late 1959 and early 1960, The Navy was in the process of launching the first Polaris missile submarine. This new platform, along with the ICBMs that the Air Force had, would cause targeting problems. Under Secretary of the Air Force Malcolm A. MacIntyre stated:

... it seems to me somewhere along the line here there should be consideration given to the problems of coordinating the Strategic weapons that are operated by different services.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, 85th Cong., 2nd Sess., 19 June 1958, 118.

<sup>66</sup> Congress, Senate, Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, Investigation of Governmental Organization for Space Activities, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., 22 April 1959, 358-59.

These targeting problems could have serious implications if they were not resolved.

General Thomas D. White, the Air Force Chief of staff, requested the establishment of a unified strategic command.<sup>67</sup> General Power, Commander in Chief, Strategic Air Command, agreed with General White that a unified command was needed. As a specified commander, General Power was in charge of all strategic nuclear weapons in the United States. Generals Power and White believed that the Air Force was the logical choice because it was already in charge of two legs of the nuclear triad.<sup>68</sup> The third leg would be the Polaris missile once it became operational. Dr. Futrell describes the resulting battle between the Air Force and the Navy:

When early discussions failed to reach a positive decision, General White formally requested the establishment of a unified US strategic command. He urged that both the Strategic Air Command and a Polaris submarine command would be subordinate to the unified strategic command. General Power supported this proposal. "I think," he said early in 1960, "that all strategic weapon systems should be under one central command, whether it is commanded by an Air Force officer, naval officer, or Army officer is a moot question." Admiral Burke, on the other hand, described the Air Force proposal as "unsound and impractical." He argued that it would not be practical to take operational command of Polaris vessels away from fleet commanders since the movements of these submarines would have to be coordinated with those of many other naval vessels that would be operating in the same waters at the same time. Once a Polaris submarine had fired its strategic missiles, moreover, it would be expected to operate on missions similar to those of other submarines. "The Navy," Burke emphasized, "had behind it

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<sup>67</sup> Futrell., 588.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

generations of experience in the operation of sea-based weapon systems. To depart from the principle of the integrated, balanced fleet at this critical time in history by assigning Polaris submarines to a command charged with operating land-based strategic bombers and missiles would weaken our nation's ability to strike back."<sup>69</sup>

The point the Navy was trying to make was that the Air Force did not know how to deal with submarines so the job of running submarines should be left to the Navy because they are the experts in submarine warfare. The Air Force on the other hand did not see controlling the submarines a problem.

This "turf" battle continued, and it eventually received the attention of President Eisenhower. The Secretary of Defense met with President Eisenhower on 6 July 1960 to discuss both the unified strategic command and targeting issues. Gates briefed the President that the present targeting procedure was not satisfactory. He stated the system's problem was that "coordination is done without benefit of a referee."<sup>70</sup>

Secretary Gates believed there was no need for a unified command. He maintained that a single integrated plan should be done jointly. Gates said that SAC should be the organization to create a Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP).<sup>71</sup> However, since the whole issue of consolidation

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum of Conference with the President, 6 July 1960. 12:30 PM.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

was so emotional, SAC would act as an agent for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This meant that the JCS had final say over the war plans. Gates also stated that the targeting staff should have members from all services so that the process would be coordinated.

President Eisenhower believed that a unified strategic command was not "feasible at this time."<sup>72</sup> The President maintained that an integrated plan was more important. Gates told the President that the whole matter of consolidation was becoming a press issue.

The compromise of a Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff seemed to soothe the Air Force. However, the Navy was not sold on the idea. Admiral Burke told the President:

This is not a compromise... This is a radical departure from previous practice. I am fearful that if the responsibility and authority for making a single operation plan is delegated to a single commander [then] the JCS will have lost control over operations at the beginning of a general war.<sup>73</sup>

General Twining, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was very irritated by Burke's attempt to stop the idea of a joint targeting staff. General Twining responded to Admiral Burke:

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> David Alan Rosenberg, "The Origins of Overkill," International Security, 7 (Spring 1983): 4.



For ten years, he [Burke] stated, the JCS had tried and failed to improve coordination in nuclear planning. The major stumbling block was always the Navy, whose leaders adamantly refused to adapt their carrier task forces or attack plans to unified command. Now Burke wanted the first NSTL and SIOP developed on an experimental basis only, in the hopes that the process could be sabotaged.<sup>74</sup>

This kind of interservice rivalry was the norm between the Air Force and the Navy during the years after World War II. It was the primary reason that a unified command was not formed during the 1960's.

#### **F. CONCLUSION**

This chapter is crucial because the bitter service rivalry between the Air Force and the Navy over strategic nuclear consolidation sets the tone for the next thirty years. The Air Force's attempts to solidify their strategic bombing mission and the Navy's drive to maintain their independence drove these two services apart. The Air Force's attempt to bring the Polaris submarine under their control was seen by the Navy as direct infringement on their mission of sea control. The dual use of the Polaris as a ballistic missile carrier and as sea control asset was the main reason the Navy wanted to maintain operational control of this new weapon system. In the end, this chapter shows just how monumental the task was to create a unified strategic

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 5.

command in view of the past problems between the Air Force and the Navy.

#### IV. DEFENSE REORGANIZATION IN THE 1980'S

##### A. INTRODUCTION

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 (GNA) was the latest attempt by Congress to unify the armed forces. This Act was created because the Services were not working together. This was evident after reviewing inadequate of service coordination and planning during Desert I, the Grenada invasion and later in the Beirut bombing. According to Congress, the Services needed some help in seeing the error of their ways. Congress took action in the form of the GNA of 1986. Members of Congress believed that by codifying joint requirements the Services would be forced to work more jointly.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in part the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. Emphasis is placed on how the Act forced the services to work more jointly. This chapter is important to STRATCOM because Congress raised the issue of a unified strategic command. This time Congress and not the Air Force wanted the STRATCOM issue reviewed. By Congress raising the strategic command issue, the Services could not table the idea as in the past without the prospect of Congress creating a strategic command by law, as in the case of the Special Operations Command. The next section addresses the Goldwater-Nichols Act itself. The following section deals with the

Unified Command Plan (UCP) and the first UCP after the Goldwater-Nichols Act became law. The final section provides an analysis on the argument of whether the Goldwater-Nichols was the major driving force behind the creation of USSTRATCOM.

## **B. THE GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ACT OF 1986**

A quick discussion of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 (GNA) will help bring the DOD reorganization into perspective. The GNA had three major points that are relevant to the discussion of USSTRATCOM. These three points are:

1. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should have greater authority.
2. The unified CinCs should have greater say in resource allocations.
3. Members of the Armed forces should serve in joint duty assignments prior to attaining flag rank.

These three points are important to the strategic command concept because greater jointness is the main aim of GNA.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff role as defined by Public Law 99-433, section 151, paragraph b, is:

**FUNCTION AS MILITARY ADVISOR-** (1) The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense.<sup>75</sup>

This part of the GNA states further that the other members of

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<sup>75</sup> Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Reorganization of the Department of Defense, 99th cong., 2nd sess., 11 March 1986, 1046.

the Joint Chiefs of Staff are also military advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense. This law states that the Chairman has to forward any dissenting opinions of the chiefs to the President and the Secretary of Defense.<sup>76</sup> Simply put, the Chairman is no longer the first among equals on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but he is in fact (law) the senior ranking member of the military. This gives the Chairman the power to solve problems among the Services. In the past, he had to strike a compromise in order to get anything done. However, the Chairman also must present any dissenting views of the Chiefs. This would seem to keep the Chairman in check so that he would command as a joint leader and not a service parochialist. The new authority of the Chairman will be evident when the issue of USSTRATCOM is readdressed.

The second major issue that was resolved by GNA was the position on the combatant commanders (CinCs). In this area, the combatant commander has total control over the forces assigned to him. In the past, the CinCs had to deal with component commanders who answered directly to their Services and not the CinC, thereby circumventing the authority of the CinC. The GNA (PL 99-433, section 164, para b.) expressly defines the position of the CinC:

(c) **COMMAND AUTHORITY OF COMBATANT COMMANDERS-** (1) Unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



Defense, the authority, direction, and control of the commander of a combatant command with respect to the commands and forces assigned to that command include the command functions of-

(A) giving authoritative direction to subordinate commands and forces necessary to carry out missions assigned to the command, including authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training and logistics;

(G) exercising the authority with respect to selecting subordinate commanders, selecting combatant command staff, suspending subordinates, and convening courts-martial,...<sup>77</sup>

This section adds that the combatant commander has organizational authority over forces under his command. As a result, the combatant commander has more say over the commanders assigned (e.g., fleet commanders) to him and the organizational structure of the combatant command than in the past.

Another area that GNA addresses is that of joint duty requirements. Previously, some of the officers assigned to the Joint Staff and unified command staffs were not the "cream of the crop." The purpose of GNA was to make joint duty attractive to officers so that the best officers were helping to run joint operations for the CinCs. In chapter 38 of the GNA, officer management for joint specialties (PL 99-433, esc 662) is described as follows:

(a) **QUALIFICATIONS**- The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that the qualifications of officers assigned joint duty assignments are such that-

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 1055.

(1) officers which are serving on, or have served on, the Joint Staff are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than for officers of the same grade and competitive category who are serving on, or have served on, headquarters staff of their armed services;

(2) officers who have the joint specialty, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate of officers of the same armed force in the same grade and competitive category who are serving on, the headquarters staff of their armed force;

(3) officers who are serving in, or have served in, joint duty assignment (other than officers covered in paragraphs (1) and (2) are expected, as a group, to be promoted at a rate not less than the rate for all officers of the same armed force in the same grade and competitive.<sup>78</sup>

This section of GNA was included to stress the importance of joint duty. This gives the Joint Staff and unified commands the authority to demand and get top notch officers. In the end, joint duty assignments can no longer be used as a dumping ground for mediocre officers.

The GNA of 1986 profoundly changed the military and forced the Services to work together. The law also gave a kind of rebirth to the notion of a unified strategic command. This readdressal of a unified strategic command was spelled out in the GNA (PL 99-433 section 212 INITIAL REVIEW OF COMBATANT COMMANDS):

(a) **MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED.**- The first review of the missions, responsibilities (including geographic boundaries), and force structure of the unified and specified combatant commands under section 161(b) of title 10, United States Code, as added by section 2111 of this Act, shall include consideration of the following:

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1067.

(1) creation of a unified command for strategic missions which would combine-

(A) the missions, responsibilities, and forces of the Strategic Air Command;

(B) the strategic missions, responsibilities, and forces of the Army and Navy; and

(C) other appropriate strategic missions, responsibilities, and forces of the armed forces.<sup>79</sup>

This Act told the military to review how they do business and in some cases make adjustments. These adjustments included things like command structure, weapons/communications procurement and joint duty. However, the Congressional direction to consider the creation of a unified command for strategic forces was a clear sign to the Services to combine their similar forces so that there would not be any costly redundancy in the country's strategic forces.

#### **C. THE UNIFIED COMMAND PLAN (UCP)/UCP REVIEW OF 1987**

The GNA of 1986 enacted into law a requirement that the Services consider the creation of a unified strategic command. The message that Congress sent to the Services was not a subtle one: there are some areas that can be consolidated to save the taxpayers money. How did the Joint Chiefs of Staff modify the unified command structure?

The document that the Joint Staff uses to manage the unified structure is called the Unified Command Plan. The

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1058.

Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1991 defines the Unified Command Plan as:

... basic guidance to the combatant commander on general responsibilities and identifies the geographic or functional areas of responsibility (AOR).

(a) The UCP is a classified JCS document issued irregularly but updated periodically. It is a task-assigning document and, therefore, specifically cites the authority granted by the Secretary of Defense through memorandum or DOD directive. The UCP is approved by the President.<sup>80</sup>

Given that definition, without a change to the UCP, there would be no creation or disestablishment of a unified command. Furthermore, Presidential approval is required to finalize changes to the unified command structure.

While the Executive Branch can change the UCP through an internal review of the unified command structure, Congress represents an external force that can also change the UCP. An excellent example of Congress exerting its power to change the UCP was in the creation of the Special Operations Command. This command was created by an amendment to the 1987 Defense Authorization Act. It should be noted that while Congress passed the bill, the President retained final authority over the unified command structure by signing the bill into law. However, the Congressional legislative process was the external force that eventually forced the establishment of the Special Operations Command. In the final analysis, the President has the final say over both internal and external

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<sup>80</sup> The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1991, 6-13.

reviews of the UCP. The only way the Congress can override a Presidential veto is by getting two-thirds of Congress to override his veto. In the Special Operations Command case, President Reagan did sign the act into law.

The first UCP review that took place after GNA became law was in 1987.<sup>81</sup> This review examined section 212 of the GNA of 1986. Since the UCP is reviewed on an irregular basis, the passage of GNA provided the Joint Staff a reason to reexamine the UCP and review its unified command structure.

Captain Paul Brown USN, who was assigned to J-5 Directorate on the Joint Staff, stated that the review of the UCP in 1987 was a reaction to section 212. This section called for the Services to "consider" consolidating nuclear forces under one unified commander. This section could be construed as a warning to the Services. According to Brown, if steps to consolidate were not taken, Congress might have initiated action to change the UCP by creating another unified command and codifying it into law.<sup>82</sup> The creation of the Special Operations Command is an example where Congress acted to create a unified command before the Services could consider the concept as mentioned in section 212. This would indicate that Congress was not willing to wait for the Services to

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Captain Paul Brown, USN. Capt. Brown worked in the organizational policy section of J-5 on the Joint Staff.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



complete their internal review of the UCP and went ahead and passed legislation to create a unified command over special forces.

The result of the JCS UCP review was to not change the current structure of nuclear forces.<sup>83</sup> Captain Brown stated that there was "no support from either the Services or the CinCs." The lack of support for a strategic command was evident when there was no creation of a unified strategic command after the 1987 review.<sup>84</sup> Captain Brown maintains that the reasons for not consolidating nuclear forces had not changed over the past thirty years. The bottom line was that there was no driving need to change the nuclear force structure in the 1987 UCP review.<sup>85</sup>

#### D. CONCLUSION

The GNA pushed to make the Services more joint. However, the Services failed to capitalize on the first serious opportunity since 1958 to unify nuclear forces. There were no major public debates over the unification of nuclear forces in 1987. The Services simply complied with the law that stated "consider" unification of nuclear forces.<sup>86</sup> The end result

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Brown, interview.

was that the GNA did not carry enough weight by itself in 1987 to force unification of strategic nuclear forces. However, GNA has had both immediate and cumulative effects. While no change occurred immediately in 1987, GNA was having a slow effect on the mindset of the military with regard to Service cooperation. The eventual retirement of the Service Chiefs and Chairman Crowe helped bring in new people with fresh perspectives on a wide range of issues.

The GNA was proclaimed as a reorganization of the Department of Defense. However, except for growth in the Joint Staff, there was not much immediate reorganization. This act primarily gave more power to the Chairman and unified commanders and pushed joint duty for officers. Few immediate changes took place. The Services and the DOD maintained their organizational structure. However, GNA has had a cumulative institutional effect on service culture. The best way to put the GNA into perspective is to say that it changed the mindset of the military. For example, by September 1992, the Navy had geared its entire new strategy, From The Sea, around the joint operations concept. However, GNA did not change the defense organization on the scale of the National Security Act of 1947.

While the GNA resulted in little external reorganization, through internal processes, it has had significant effects, given that the intent of Congress was to get the Services to consolidate. In 1987, the Services had their chance to

consolidate nuclear forces and decided not to reorganize the unified command structure at that time. The President agreed with the Services by approving the UCP that stated a unified command over nuclear forces was not needed. In the end, the GNA did not impress upon the Services enough to consolidate their nuclear forces under one unified command. However, GNA established the climate for further consolidation by altering the mindset (culture) of individual Services to be receptive to initiatives of service individuals like General Lee Butler.

## **V. THE END OF THE COLD WAR ERA**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The end of the Cold War, starting in 1989, has changed how the military plans and deploys its forces. Destruction of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union was seen as the end of Communism in Europe. The end of the Cold War is seen in this thesis as the main argument for the creation of USSTRATCOM. Once Soviet communism was declared dead, a strong U.S. nuclear force, in the order of 12,000 warheads, was no longer needed. The recent proposals to disarm down to 3,500 warheads foretell the nuclear force structure in the near future. Therefore, there was no need for SAC. Remaining U.S. nuclear forces could be combined to save money.

### **B. THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD AT THE JCS**

The UCP review of 1987 included the first attempt, since the passage of GNA, to rejuvenate the idea of a unified command over strategic forces. The end result was not to change the unified command plan. However, Congress did force a change in the UCP by creating a unified command over special operations forces. The question that must be asked is: Why not have a unified command over strategic forces as discussed in the GNA of 1986?

There are probably two answers to this question. The first answer is that the Service Chiefs really felt that there was no reason to change a system that was not broken. Imbedded in this idea was the continued service rivalry that the Air Force and the Navy had lived with for the past thirty-five years. Since there was no public debate over section 212, it can only be surmised that the Service Chiefs were content to keep a system that they knew and trusted.

The second answer to the question is probably more an issue of uncertainty with regard to the future of the military and its force structure. In this case, the Chiefs were caught in a transition period between the pre-GNA era and the post-GNA era. The chiefs and the Chairman were either not willing or unable to make drastic changes in the UCP because they were the old Cold War warriors who were comfortable with the old Cold War institutions. The Chairman in particular was not willing to exert his new powers as the undisputed senior military officer. The main reason for this seeming lack of assertiveness by Admiral Crowe stems from the idea that he did not want to rock the boat and suddenly pull rank over the other chiefs who until GNA had been equal in stature.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> General George L. Butler, Commander in Chief United States Strategic Command, interviewed by author, Offutt, AFB, 9 March 1993.



If Admiral Crowe had exerted his new power, the other Service Chiefs would have bucked the chairman and nothing would have gotten done.<sup>88</sup>

The only way to get through the transition period and on with new ideas was to appoint new Service Chiefs and a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Fortunately, the military establishment did not have to wait too long for changes at the top. By the summer of 1989, there had been a complete change in Service Chiefs and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The most important change was the arrival of General Colin Powell, USA, as the new Chairman. He was politically astute, well liked and trusted within all circles in Washington including the military. His two previous jobs were as National Security Advisor under President Reagan and as Commander-in-Chief Forces Command.

The second major player in the creation of USSTRATCOM, General Lee Butler, USAF, had moved up from the Vice Director for Strategic Plans and Policy, J-5, of the Joint Staff to Director of J-5. General Butler would be the man who would bring the idea of a unified strategic command over nuclear forces to reality.

General Butler stated that when General Powell became the chairman, the two of them sat down and discussed their views

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<sup>88</sup> Butler, interview.

of what the future would look like.<sup>89</sup> General Butler stated his views to General Powell as follows:

General, I think the Cold War is over. We're about to see a sweeping transformation of the international security environment. That is going to lead to a task for you to take the United States Armed Forces down an entirely new path, one that involves sharp reductions, a revisit of roles and missions, and into a technological future whose outlines we are only beginning to see.<sup>90</sup>

This statement to the new Chairman indicates that General Butler was thinking about the future in a new way with new ideas. While General Butler was not prophesying the immediate collapse of the Soviet Union, he was planning for a future where the Soviet Union would no longer be the threat that it once had been. General Powell's response was one of agreement with General Butler.<sup>91</sup>

General Butler stated that Chairman Powell gave him a kind of intellectual license to go out and come up with ideas of what the future would look like. Powell told Butler not to worry about things like Service rivalries, laws or money.<sup>92</sup> His job was to come up with a plan of what the military would look like in the future.

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<sup>89</sup> Presentation By General George L. Butler to the Air Force Historical Foundation, 18 September 1992.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> General George L. Butler, Commander-in-Chief United States Strategic Command, interview by author, Offutt, AFB, 9 March 1993.

General Butler then had a brain-storming session with members of his staff in J-5 on the future of the military. It was at that point that General Butler proposed the idea that a strategic command over nuclear forces should be brought up again.<sup>93</sup> Major Outlaw, USMC, was the principal action officer for the draft plan for USSTRATCOM. By August 1990, the first draft of USSTRATCOM was in the hands of General Butler.<sup>94</sup>

The rest of the plan that General Butler developed with his staff was a new UCP. General Butler stated to the author that the plan he presented to the Chairman included not only a unified strategic command, but four other CinCs. These included the two area CinCs, Pacific and Atlantic commands, a Space Command and finally a contingency command.<sup>95</sup> According to General Butler, Space command was the odd CinC. Since he did not know what to do with Space command, General Butler said he left the decision to General Powell.<sup>96</sup>

Once the initial plan was drawn up, General Butler and his staff refined each part of the UCP prior to briefing the Chairman. The Chairman accepted the initial plan and decided to present it to the Chiefs in a Tank meeting on 21 November

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<sup>93</sup> Capt. Brown, interview.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>96</sup> Butler, interview.

1990.<sup>97</sup> The two biggest issues that were to be discussed were strategic command and another command that would be a super CinC.<sup>98</sup>

The new command was dubbed Americas Command by General Maxwell Thurman. The initial reaction by the Chiefs was heated because this new command would essentially take the place of the Services as the primary trainers of their forces. After further heated discussion the final resolution by the Chiefs was to table the idea for another time.<sup>99</sup> Brinkmanship by the chairman enabled the USSTRATCOM idea to survive the hostility of the Americas Command proposal.<sup>100</sup>

The further development of the STRATCOM proposal was to be done at the Joint Staff level so that Service parochialism would not interfere with the planned UCP. The basic assumption was that if the initial plan were developed by the Joint Staff, then the Services would not feel threatened by an aggressive service idea.<sup>101</sup> The only CinC who attempted to give input to the strategic command idea was General John Chain, USAF, Commander-in-Chief Strategic Air Command. In July 1991, General Chain gave his inputs to General Powell because

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<sup>97</sup> Capt. Brown, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>99</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>100</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, interview.

he discovered that the Joint Staff was working on the strategic command idea again. General Powell wrote General Chain thanking him for his concern about the new UCP but told him that he would not solicit any suggestions on the draft UCP until the draft had been briefed to the CinCs at the CinCs conference in August.<sup>102</sup>

The draft UCP was briefed to the Chiefs on 15 July 1991. The reaction to the UCP change that would create USSTRATCOM received a favorable review from the Chiefs. The Air Force was not hard to sell because the Air Force had sought such a change for the past thirty years. The Army and Marine Corps really did not have any stake in the new command because neither one of these Services were in the strategic nuclear business. The Navy was the only Service which had to be sold on the plan. During the meeting, Chairman Powell left the issues of USSTRATCOM and Americas Command up to the Chiefs.

The Chiefs resoundingly killed the Americas Command idea. They believed that an Americas Command would infringe on the institutional prerogatives of the Services. Once the issue of Americas Command was settled, General Powell asked Admiral Kelso what he thought about the STRATCOM proposal. Admiral Kelso said the plan had "merit."<sup>103</sup> The only problem that he saw was a personnel problem. This problem was strictly a

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<sup>102</sup> Brown, interview.

<sup>103</sup> General Butler and Captain Brown repeated the same comment in interviews with the author.



manning issue. Admiral Kelso did not know if he could free up enough people initially to staff positions at the new unified command. However, Admiral Kelso said that "the devil was in the details."<sup>104</sup> In the end, Admiral Kelso gave the STRATCOM proposal his personal support.

The proposed UCP went to the CinCs conference in August 1991. The outcome of the conference was the same as the Tank meeting the month before. There was heated debate over the Americas Command but the STRATCOM idea went through without too much problem.<sup>105</sup>

The question that has to be asked is: Why did the Navy go along with the STRATCOM proposal now when they fought the issue for the past thirty years? The answer comes down to who prepared the plan and the personalities involved.<sup>106</sup> The plan was prepared and proposed by the Joint Staff instead of the Air Force, as it had been in the past. This made it easier to sell to the Chiefs because no one service was directly threatening another. Also, the people involved were willing to put aside their service parochialism and seriously consider the plan. After the August conference, the real selling of the STRATCOM plan went into effect.

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<sup>104</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>105</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>106</sup> General Butler, Vice Admiral Colley and Captain Brown all agree that personalities was the main driver for the creation of USSTRATCOM.

### C. THE END OF STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

The Persian Gulf War left the United States with a resounding victory credited largely to the effectiveness of air power. The Air Force had a fantastic public relations campaign going during the war. This campaign gave the Air Force an A+ for their performance during the Gulf War. However, General Butler knew that the Strategic Air Command forces did not live up to their press clippings.<sup>107</sup>

After the war, General Butler wanted to have a "gloves off assessment" of SAC's performance during the Gulf War. General Butler felt that the conventional training of bomber crews was seriously lacking and the SAC generals' meeting agreed with Butler's assessment of SAC's performance.<sup>108</sup> General Butler believed that something had to change with regard to the role of SAC. During his confirmation as CINCSTRAT, General Butler explained to Senator Nunn why SAC was disestablished:

I think that they (SAC personnel) understand a number of very profound things. One, the Cold War is over. They know that. They realize that the world has become a very different place. Strategic Air Command was organized for essentially one purpose, and that is assist in the global U.S. strategy to contain communism, and play a vital role in that regard, but that threat has essentially receded and it is a different kind of world.

I think the key that unlocked it for me and for all of our people was the Gulf War, when they saw the vital role that SAC's aerial forces-- the bombers, the tankers, and reconnaissance--played. That had a big impact on the senior leadership of the Air Force. And we concluded at

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<sup>107</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>108</sup> Butler, interview.

that time that with the drawing down of the Soviet threat, with the changing world and the likelihood of the kinds of contingencies that we saw in the Gulf--perhaps not on that scale, but certainly of threat type-- that our aerial forces were best suited to be married, as they were many years ago with the conventional forces in the Tactical Air Command.<sup>109</sup>

This statement by the last commander of SAC shows that the Air Force took a hard look at their command structure and decided to change. The disestablishment of SAC came at a time when General Butler was finalizing the creation of U.S. Strategic Command. General Butler maintains that his proposal to disestablish SAC was the "spark that lit the reorganization fuse for the Air Force."<sup>110</sup> In the end, General Butler knew that Strategic Command could replace SAC without any loss of deterrent capability. He explained that the bomber force could be combined with the forces in TAC to concentrate on conventional missions and still be able to accomplish their nuclear mission if the situation occurred. He also stated that the submarine force could provide a credible deterrent posture.<sup>111</sup>

The final touches of USSTRATCOM were being ironed out. General Butler went and talked to Admiral Kelso to obtain his ideas on the organizational structure of STRATCOM. The Admiral believed that there should be strong Navy

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<sup>109</sup> Congress, Senate, Stenographic Transcript of Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, 14 May 1992.

<sup>110</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>111</sup> Butler, interview.

representation on the staff at STRATCOM.<sup>112</sup> General Butler also consulted with the other nuclear CinCs. The other nuclear CinCs had no problems in relinquishing their nuclear roles. The CinCs believed that the nuclear mission was sapping their staffs and were glad to get rid of the responsibility.<sup>113</sup> The CinCs were glad to get rid of the nuclear planning baggage and instead concentrate on planning for regional, non-nuclear contingencies that were more likely to occur. However, with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, future regional contingencies may not be strictly non-nuclear in nature. In this case, the regional CinCs may have forfeited their nuclear roles thinking of the "classic" nuclear war and overlooked the future unconventional nuclear wars that may occur in their specific regions.

#### **D. A NEW ERA OF SERVICE COOPERATION**

The creation of STRATCOM came at a period when the world was changing. The Persian Gulf War was started and concluded during the drafting of the UCP change and the coup in the Soviet Union had not taken place until the STRATCOM proposal was already accepted by the Services and the CinCs.

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<sup>112</sup> Butler ,interview.

<sup>113</sup> Vice Admiral Michael C. Colley, Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. Strategic Command, interviewed by author, Offutt,AFB, 8 March 1993.

There were three reasons why the STRATCOM idea was not opposed by the Navy as it had back in 1959. The first reason was the initial plan was proposed by the Joint Staff and not a service. If a service such as Air Force had once again proposed the STRATCOM idea, the Navy would possibly view the idea as a land grab by the Air Force at the expense of the Navy. In this case, General Butler's position as a Joint Staff officer overshadowed the fact the he was also an Air Force officer. His reputation as a honest broker helped the STRATCOM idea come into being.

The second reason why the Navy now accepted the idea of a unified strategic nuclear command was that they were not threatened as an institution. The original plan for a strategic command in 1960 was seen by the Navy as an Air Force attempt to gain control over all strategic nuclear missions. This meant that the Air Force would be in command of all nuclear forces including naval assets. Under the present system, the only institution that suffered was Strategic Air Command. The Navy did not have to make such a drastic change. The command structure of the ballistic submarine force remained unchanged except at the very top. Simply put, the submarine commander saw no change in how he did his business. In the end, the Air Force was willing to disestablish SAC. This action alone suggests that the Air Force is not as institutionally oriented as the Navy. The disestablishment of SAC seems to follow Builder's assertion that the Air Force is



not truly an institution.<sup>114</sup> The argument could be made that the Air Force was willing to disestablish a command in order to save the bombers. While this could be true, there is no solid evidence to prove this theory.

The final reason why the Navy accepted STRATCOM was simply personality-driven. If Admiral Kelso had not gone along with the plan, General Powell was willing to let the issue die. Instead, Admiral Kelso had the same foresight as General Butler and saw STRATCOM as an "idea whose time has come."<sup>115</sup> Admiral Kelso was also involved in the details for establishing STRATCOM. He went to the fleet and told the commanders that he was onboard with the STRATCOM idea and that the Navy would do everything to make the plan work. He finally went to the retired Navy leaders and told them that views like Rear Admiral Holland's were old Cold War thinking.<sup>116</sup> Captain Brown stated that when the Holland article was published, General Powell decided not to respond to the article, primarily because it was nothing more than outdated service parochialism.<sup>117</sup> General Butler believed that the Holland article actually helped the STRATCOM proposal

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<sup>114</sup> Builder, 32.

<sup>115</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>116</sup> Colley and Butler, interview. Admiral Holland wrote a an article in the August 1991 issue of Proceedings blasting the idea of a unified strategic command.

<sup>117</sup> Brown, interview.

because it was a purely parochial argument that was really old Cold War thinking and outdated.<sup>118</sup>

## E. CONCLUSION

The end of the Cold War arguably was not really the major driver in the creation of STRATCOM. The time period when the plan was under development included both pre-coup and post-coup Soviet eras. According to General Butler, the people involved was the lone major driving factor in the creation of USSTRATCOM. During his Senate confirmation hearings, General Butler responded to a question from Senator Exxon as to why STRATCOM was standing up now:

Senator Exxon: Had there not been a demise of the Soviet Union as a superpower as we have seen in the last 2 or 3 years, would--in your judgment-- had not happened, would we still have made dramatic changes that have taken place and the creation of a new STRATCOM command at Offutt; or would we more likely have maintained our SAC structure, as was the case for the last 30 or 40 years?

General Butler: Senator, I think we should have done this 30 years ago when it was first proposed.

The Goldwater-Nichols legislation underscored the importance of unified field commands; of putting under the operational control of one commander all of the forces that are responsible for a uniquely-identifiable mission of broad and continuing scope. That is the definition of a unified command.

If ever there were a mission that fit that definition, it is strategic nuclear deterrence. And as consequence, I think what we are doing now is simply a rather late arrival at a solution was offered in 1959.

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<sup>118</sup> Butler, interview.

As to what immediately prompted it, while the end of the Cold War did encourage us to think more broadly about a question of our global, military organization, I really think it is attributable, most importantly, to an advance in interservice cooperation, and a willingness to address issues and to make changes that, in the past, were simply not possible because people did not have sufficient trust, one service to another, to put their forces under the control of someone who did not wear the same uniform.<sup>119</sup>

General Butler also strongly maintains that Admiral Kelso was the major reason why the stand-up of STRATCOM went so smoothly.<sup>120</sup> His answer clearly states that while GNA and the end of the Cold War did have some impact on the creation of STRATCOM, personalities were really the major driving factor in the creation of STRATCOM.

In the end, General Butler was right. However, the fact that the post GNA 1987 UCP review did not result in the immediate unity of command over nuclear forces is too simplistic a judgement. It appears that the cumulative effect of GNA on Service mindsets, or culture, at least produced an "enabling effect" that empowered the right people to make this monumental change at the right time.

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<sup>119</sup> Congress, Senate, Transcripts of General Butler's confirmation hearings, 14 May 1992, 60-1.

<sup>120</sup> Butler, Colley, and Brown, interview.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter evaluates the major thesis arguments for the 1992 creation of USSTRATCOM. These competing arguments are:

1. The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was the driving factor that forced the creation of a unified command over strategic forces.
2. The end of the Cold War was the major driver in the establishment of USSTRATCOM.

These two arguments were pitted against each other in order to determine which one was really the driving force behind the creation of U.S. Strategic Command.

The first argument dealt with the GNA. This act included a section that requested the Services to "consider" the idea of creating a unified strategic command. The Services did review the idea to consolidate all nuclear forces. This was conducted in the form of a UCP review. The Services used this forum to debate and discuss the possibility of creating a unified strategic command. The end result of that review in 1987 was not to consolidate nuclear forces and therefore leave the present U.S. nuclear command structure in place.

It would appear that the Services and the CinCs were not willing to debate the issue. The reasons given for keeping the present structure in place were the same ones the Services had argued over for the past 35 years. However, GNA did start

to change the mindset within the Services about jointness and the need for greater cooperation.

The second explanation is that the end of the Cold War forced the consolidation of strategic nuclear forces under one unified commander. The evidence used to support this argument dealt primarily with those individuals who were instrumental in the creation of USSTRATCOM. General Butler, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Strategic Command, was instrumental in answering the argument. He maintained that the end of the Cold War did force the Services to think more broadly, but that it was not the main reason for the creation of USSTRATCOM. Vice Admirals Colley, Bacon, and Captain Brown of the Joint Staff, corroborated the assertions that General Butler has made time and again in speeches and in testimony before Congress.<sup>121</sup>

The reason why STRATCOM was created was not a dramatic one. It was neither enactment of GNA nor the end of the Cold War. The answer was as simple as trust among the Chiefs. General Butler has testified to Congress that the Services were willing to put aside their differences and create a strategic command because the personalities involved trusted each other. The creation of USSTRATCOM was possible because men like General Powell, General Butler, Admiral Kelso and Vice Admiral Colley were willing to make it happen despite

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<sup>121</sup> VADM R.F. Bacon, USN (ret.), "Seizing the Strategic Baton," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1992, 74-5.



past Service differences. General Butler gives the Navy and Admiral Kelso great credit for making the establishment of STRATCOM go so smoothly.<sup>122</sup> It should be noted that even though the GNA and the end of the Cold War did not directly cause the creation of STRATCOM, they certainly were excellent reasons to consolidate after the people involved decided to make the new unified command become a reality.

In retrospect, while the idea of a unified strategic command probably "had merit" 35 years ago, it took personal trust among the service chiefs and altered circumstances to put aside their past rivalries to make STRATCOM a reality. After interviewing officers at STRATCOM, one gets the feeling that everything is going smoothly. General Butler and Vice Admiral Colley maintain that the transition has been very smooth. While this may be true to some extent, all the Service rivalries do not disappear overnight. It will take time before the Air Force and Navy learn to speak the same language.<sup>123</sup>

The future will tell whether forming STRATCOM was a good idea or a moot point, in view of the changing world environment. The end of the Cold War may have lessened the need for a strategic command. However, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, there will be a need for

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<sup>122</sup> Butler, interview.

<sup>123</sup> CDR. C.J. Pickart of USSTRATCOM (aide to Vice Admiral Colley), telephone interview, 30 November 1992.

STRATCOM.<sup>124</sup> The START II and START II follow-on treaties that are about to take effect are sure to give STRATCOM a healthy amount of business. On the planning side of STRATCOM, members of J-5 (previously JSTPS) suggest that the SIOP may no longer play the central role that it had in the past.<sup>125</sup>

In the end, STRATCOM was probably the best move for all concerned. The rotation of the CinC between Air Force and Navy may allow interservice rivalry to fade away to a large extent. The new doctrine (Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations, Joint Pub 3-12) that STRATCOM developed solidifies its position as a true unified command because it speaks for all Services on nuclear issues, not just one. Since this command is new, the test of time will unveil its effectiveness.

The circumstances that were involved in the creation of STRATCOM could be applied to future changes in the military establishment. Individual trust among the Service Chiefs will in the long run be required to win over the old and destructive interservice rivalries. Men like Generals Powell and Butler and Admiral Kelso have been able to bring about the Service cooperation that GNA envisioned. In the future, the Chiefs and their Services must be willing to be open-minded and ready to approve changes that in the past were unheard of

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<sup>124</sup> Colley, interview.

<sup>125</sup> MAJ. Lester of USSTRATCOM J-512, telephone interview by author, 18 November 1992.

(e.g., creating STRATCOM). In the end, the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff must also be a forward thinking man of vision like Generals Powell and Butler.

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Offutt, AFB, NE 68113-6000
16. Dr. James J. Tritten 1  
(Code NS/Tr)  
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